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Cyrenaica

COMPARATIVE FAMILY SYSTEMS

EDITOR

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Chapter

7

*Aspects of the Family Among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica**

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Marriage and the Father-Son Relationship

When a marriage takes place among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica, a nuptial tent is set up some distance away from that of the groom's father. There is no particular significance about the nuptial tent itself, but it must be pitched at a distance so that the father "will not see it" — although, obviously, in a country of large level plains, it stands out conspicuously. This pretence that the tent remains unseen by the father is pushed to the point of his denying any knowledge of what is afoot. A middle-aged or elderly man with a family adopts a similar attitude to any marriage in which his son participates, as groom or as guest. An elder, the father of three unmarried sons (one of whom, in his late twenties, was known to be getting impatient about marriage), when I asked after his eldest son, insisted that he was away with the camels, although the son was conspicuous in a semicircle of young men encouraging a blindfolded maiden in the movements of her seductive dance outside a wedding tent in his full view. Prior to the wedding festivities, the

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584 Prior to the wedding festivities, the
593 father will have participated in negotiations, although even in these he will have remained silent, leaving an affine, as a rule, to arrange the details with the girl's father and his kinsmen. The father feigns aloofness from the start of negotiations until after the wedding celebrations have ended. Before inquiring into this seemingly odd behaviour, a few further details of marriage ceremonies need to be mentioned briefly.

585 The bride is carried to the nuptial tent on a camel, seated in a cagelike
342 structure placed on the camel's back, this canopy covered over with carpets
[492] and at least one long blanket — later to be used to divide her tent into male and female quarters — which constitute part of the goods given to a woman
[788] on marriage. On her arrival, while she is still seated in her canopy, the camel is led round the tent seven times by a small boy. She then descends and is hustled into the tent by a number of women who make a show of their attempts to conceal her from view. Inside the tent the bride is enclosed in one corner in a kind of cubicle partitioned off by a length of blanket.

585 In the meantime, the groom has affected to escape, but is "caught," while
[533] running away, by his fellows, who "compel" him to return to the nuptial tent,
[831] to the accompaniment of their lewd songs telling of the sexual pleasures awaiting him. Much of this is horseplay, but the young men carry it out brazenly and the groom is required to show reluctance to continue with the ceremonies. His entry into the nuptial tent is marked by an expectant hush that falls over the crowd of men gathered, as they await the result of the virginity test the groom is about to perform, which he does by wrapping part of his toga round one of his fingers to pierce the hymen. Sharp shrieks from
[202] the bride give the signal that the test has been undertaken; not a stir moves the crowd until evidence of its success has been publicly displayed, which is given by the groom hoisting the blood-stained portion of the toga through the corner of the tent on a pole, followed by firing three shots from his rifle. Jubilantly, the men gathered fire volley after volley from their rifles just over the nuptial tent, and the seven-day celebrations begin.

585 A full descriptive account of a marriage, or many of the ritual details
589 woven into it need not be given here. What is included is intended to illus-
[593] trate certain relationships between father and son, and between one
[561] generation and another. In this connection two further points are appropri-
[535] ate. First, during the week of festival, young men gather outside the nuptial tent each night to encourage a maiden in her dancing, clapping their hands
[533] to the point of injury "so that we will have a wife soon." The celebrations belong to the bachelors, and they are the only ones to engage in the singing and hand clapping. It is they too who stop the bridal camel on its way to
[538] the nuptial tent to recite obscene rhymes to the bride, and they also shout
[831] their rather dubious consolations to the bride who, during the virginity test, crying out for her mother, is assured by them that the night holds promise
585 for her which her mother could never extend. The married men, particularly
602 the close senior agnates of the groom, stay away from it all, discussing mat-
521 ters unconnected with the affair.

Second, the fiction that nothing has happened, which characterises the father's behavior, does not cease with the termination of the celebrations. Each morning, soon after daybreak and before the camp is astir, the groom must leave his bride and repair to his father's tent to lie at his father's side "as he always had done in the past, as if he had not left him." This conventional ruse is followed, not just for the seven days of wedding festivities, but is continued after the groom has moved back into the camp proper, and pitched his tent alongside his father's, with the ropes of the two tents crossing.

In matters other than sleeping arrangements, this fiction that "nothing has happened" is maintained. Marriage does not mean the immediate creation of a wholly separate domestic unit. Save for the appearance of an additional tent, the ordinary run of daytime activities is scarcely altered. To mention perhaps the most important feature of the relationships between father and son, the groom continues to eat with his father. As yet, the son does not use his own bowl,[1] and may not, indeed, do so for several years. The important symbolism of "eating together" or "eating out of the one bowl," the act of commensality creating a bond of fellowship about which Robertson Smith[2] wrote so eloquently can only be referred to here in one of its many aspects. Bedouin themselves stress that eating together is a strong bond, and the communal meal is always used for this purpose after the settlement of a dispute, or at the conclusion of a blood-money agreement, and so on. It is significant also in the sense that those who partake of a meal accept the authority of the host; he becomes their protector, and a blow against one of them is struck at him also. Even if the guest is an enemy,[3] as long as he has eaten from another's bowl his life is safe.

The slaughter of an animal for another person creates a bond which has its roots in the intimate connection between man and his animals. In a very vivid way, the Bedouin view their animals as part of themselves, as part of their *Risiq*, their general wealth, in which their sons are included. It is this mystical association between a man and his animals which distinguishes a meal consisting of the meat of an animal slaughtered from ones' own flock or herd from a meal consisting of meat bought from a butcher's shop — often given by the plateau peoples of Northern Cyrenaica to their guests, but which the camel-herding Bedouin of the south regard as despicable hospitality. A slaughtered animal is the food, *par excellence*, which establishes this bond

[1] When Bedouin take their meals, they eat from large wooden bowls imported from south of the Sahara. It is a matter of custom that a man does not eat alone unless it is unavoidable, a custom of such strength, that, when, one day, only an elder, occupying a tent the ropes of which were crossed with mine, was left in camp, he brought his bowl into my tent "so that I will be eating with a man."

[2] William Robertson Smith. *The Religion of the Semites*. 3rd ed. London: Macmillan, 1927.

[3] A stranger entering a camp is under no obligation to give his identity. Few do so until they have partaken of a meal. In the past, the Bedouin claim, the period of anonymity could last for 40 days, but nowadays, they say they limit it to two only. I have known strangers enter a camp, receive entertainment, and leave without offering any specific identity.

571 231 264 182 593 585 182 (425) (556) between man and man, although the various cereal dishes which constitute their regular meals are said to have a similar effect.

The son who continues to eat with his father "as he always had been doing," also continues to accept his authority. Indeed he could do little else at this stage, for he lacks the economic means to cut away. Neither at marriage nor after is there any transfer of wealth from father to son. The new tent recently pitched is no more than a dormitory to which the young couple retire at night. During the daytime the son is still to be seen in his father's tent, and, in the male quarters, things appear to be much the same as before. In the female quarters, the only superficial change is the more frequent appearance among the women of one who, before marriage, often sat among them if she had been a close neighbour or a close cousin previously; or of an additional helper if she had come from afar. On the surface things remain "as they always have been," although in fact, a whole set of changes have been initiated.

852 881 764 858 789 857 233 883 233 (431) (411) (481) (885) 852 88 796 (011) (554) *Rites de passage* are few among the Bedouin. A man's progress in life is ceremonially marked by only four events: his birth, circumcision, marriage and burial. His development into manhood is not marked by clearly defined stages. About the age of seven, the henna markings on the front of a boy's shirt for protection from the evil eye are not renewed, the cowrie shell stitched to the front of his cap as a kind of talisman against the evil eye is removed and he is no longer permitted free access to the women's quarters. As he grows older, he will be instructed in goat-herding, and later taught to follow the sheep. In his late teens he will have to undertake the more arduous and responsible task of herding the camels. Coincident with camel-herding, he may be given a gun by his father. Shortly afterwards he must undertake the stringent test of manhood, a journey to a distant oasis for dates. These changes are not marked off by a *rite de passage*. The rites a man undergoes during the course of a lifetime are minimal, and in the sense that they are concerned with only the basic events in a man's life anywhere (save for circumcision, which is a minor celebration anyway), they are irreducible. Moreover, the rituals which exist do not comprehend the same multiplicity of relationships as rituals which occur in many other African societies.[4] It is true that the ceremonies referred to in this chapter by no means include all the Bedouin rituals. It is also true that the events mentioned vary in elaboration, and in the number of symbols present in them, but they are not multiplied or reduced for different people.

(613) (554) (602) In this context it is important to stress that we are here dealing with a lineage society where social differentiation is not built up into differences of rank, where the roles to which a man succeeds are almost wholly captured by his kinship relationships with other men and which are sociologically to be distinguished from the roles a man enters into by acquisition of office,

[4] See, for example, the elaboration of rituals discussed in M. Gluckman (Ed.), *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations*. Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1962.

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membership of associations and so on. The statuses a Bedouin achieves depend not on an ordered acquisition through the inheritance of roles or election to them, but on his personal manipulation of linkages in his jockeying with others. Rites are minimal because there are few defined statuses an individual can predictably acquire. The equalitarianism of the desert denudes the Bedouin of ritual riches. Complimentarily, rites which do occur are thrown into exaggerated relief by the absence of others, and in their isolation, become not merely a "passage" but a cataclysmic change. Marriage and burial both comprehend limited fields of relations, but accompanying ceremonies may bring several hundred people together, people who otherwise rarely gather in these numbers to meet one another as kinsmen and neighbours, and it is suggested that the emphasis given to the events dramatises the significance of the changes they produce. In the discussion of the changes brought about by marriage, the Bedouin view of what is entailed will be considered first.

The Bedouin View of Marriage

After marriage, the Bedouin argue, a son has a tent of his own, a woman over whom he has authority and soon children to make him a father. Marriage causes split, branching. A new family is created, holding the potential of a new lineage. The separation is so painful a matter for the father that he cannot contemplate it, hence his pretence that he has no knowledge of wedding festivities, and his subsequent attitude that nothing has happened.

Interestingly, there are two other occasions when this attitude is to be observed. When a man kills within his corporate group,[6] he may flee his tribe or he may be compelled to leave; later he is likely to return and, when he does, he is received with a minimum of show. Every attempt is made to suppress knowledge of the event.

Again, if incest occurs, the memory of it must somehow be suppressed, and it is an ever-present danger. Men, permitted four wives simultaneously and also able to engage in a plurality of marriages through divorce or death of spouses, may have children showing an age difference of two or three generations. Thus it comes about that a man may be of an age in relation to his father's sister which permits them as children to behave as if they were first paternal cousins. As an adult, the preferred spouse for a man is a father's brother's daughter. In terms of relationships between adolescents the situation in which a man is of the same age generation as his father's sister is fraught with danger. In one such case, between a man and his father's sister, the male child of the union was put out in the desert to be

[6] Bedouin are disposed in groups which, in summer, usually constitute a single community, around or near a watering point. The men of this group are interlinked by reference to an ancestor four or five ascending generations, reckoning from the generation of men of about 20 years. When, elsewhere in this chapter reference is made to corporations, it will be to groups of this kind.

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devoured by wild animals, the girl was "given"[6] to a close cousin who had shot his sister. Both now reside with an enemy tribal section. The two acts were equated. They were similar to the extent that both created a situation which defied institutional resolution. The culprits were exorcised. The girl's lover remains with his group — the odium for the male is incomparably less than for the female, since, while maternity is easy to establish, paternity is frequently shrouded in doubt — and during the months I lived with this particular group, there was never a mention of the affair. It was as if "nothing had happened."

If asked why these two events cause such profound distress, the answers the Bedouin give are twofold: they can do nothing about them, and they cause split. By split in this context they mean split in the lineage; split in the case of homicide because it may lead to a demand for blood-money which is payable only between corporations, and split in the case of incest because it causes chaos in relationships. Marriage, in one sense, their reasoning runs, is similar, for it too causes split. Whatever may be the analytic strength of the arguments that homicide and incest precipitate splitting, the argument that marriage does so is spurious. In what sense can marriage mean split? Bedouin men marry "so that we may beget many sons, to make a big lineage later on." The worst fate that can befall a man as a result of his son's marriage is that he, in later generations, will become the focal point in a series of branching descent lines. The alternative — that his sons remain unmarried — can only mean that his name would disappear through want of successors to carry it on, which is one of the greatest evils which can befall a man, according to Bedouin sentiment: better split than oblivion. If the key to the interpretation of the father's attitude to his son's marriage is not that it causes split, it must lie elsewhere in their relationship. What marriage does is alter the distribution of authority between father and son. In order to pursue this, it is necessary first to clarify the types of authority involved, and then assess them in a post-marital situation.

The Division of Authority Between the Family and the Corporation

Politically, a person's status is determined for him at birth. At this time a man has the right to accept or deny paternity. Denial is tantamount to an accusation of adultery by his wife. In practice, once a wife has given birth to a male child, whatever doubts people may harbour regarding paternity, the husband accepts the child as his. "The boy for the bed," is a saying often heard among the Bedouin; but it remains the husband's prerogative to invest the child with legitimacy, hence, political status. Only if a husband becomes aware that he is publicly considered a cuckold, or if he catches his wife and a lover *in flagrante delicto*, is he at all likely to take action. Otherwise he may

[6] A marriage is illegal unless it is accompanied by an agreement to transfer wealth to the girl's father.

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indeed welcome unfaithfulness on his wife's part. If a man is very old, and his wife very young, it is likely that she will entertain lovers; if a man leaves camp for a long absence his wife may not remain chaste. In both cases, if the liaisons lead to the birth of a child, particularly a male, the husband greets the news with unrestrained enthusiasm — "praise be to God," as their saying goes. Incapacity[7] to produce offspring, if a husband is convinced of it, may lead him to delegate a kinsman to serve his wife for procreative purposes: he has the legal authority, as husband, to do so, and to require his wife to submit, for the only alternative, if he is not to die without "issue," is to "take" a son from his brother and fulfill the obligations towards this boy required of a pater, namely, attend to his circumcision, provide him with teaching in the Koran (a duty neglected by most) and give him the wealth with which to marry.

Granting the acceptance of paternity, whatever the circumstances of conception, a male child, *ipso facto*, acceeds to membership of a corporation, and is subject to the authority of that group in a number of matters. In many situations it would appear that a son is under the father's political control. At a moot, the son, if he speaks at all, will do so only to corroborate his father. Discussions among men in a small camp evoke a similar pattern of behaviour. Until the father becomes senile or dies, a son cannot publicly pursue an independent course, but he desists by virtue of his relationships with his father *qua* pater, not because of his father's political power to coerce. All men of a corporation, in any event, "speak with one word" at a moot, and a son, by his assent to the common view, also supports his father; in so doing he yields to the political authority of his corporation, and not that of his father.

Membership in the corporation invests a man with other privileges and duties. Protection against external enemies comes within the corporation's jurisdiction, although in a particular situation, the father may well be the person who dispenses it. Complimentarily, if a man commits an offense against a person not of his group, whatever private thoughts his father may have about the act, the responsibility lies not on his shoulders but on the group, and he is compelled to share this responsibility equally with all other members. For example, if a son commits a homicide the father bears the same legal responsibility for the act, and is under obligation to contribute the same share of blood-money as he would be if the act had been perpetrated by any male of the group other than his son. Even in a narrower field of relations between father and son the group exercises its authority. Acting as pater, a man may punish his son, physically or otherwise; he may not do so to the point of injury, for personal injury comes within the legitimate sphere of the corporation. A man's "bone" belongs to his group; he is an in-

[7] Impotency is a special case, because it is dishonourable for a woman to remain wife to an impotent man. She cannot divorce him, but her father can insist on a witnessed test of impotency and, if it is proven, the husband is compelled to divorce her. Barrenness, obviously, is a different matter.

593 613 tegral part of "the one body"; events which affect a man in this context lie outside a father's field of jurisdiction. The political authority vested in a corporation acts to circumscribe the authority of persons in other fields.

Other rights stem from political membership. As a person with a defined position in a lineage corporation, a man has the right to use the natural resources of its territory. His father, although he instructs his son where to plough and when to water the animals, cannot deny him access to wells, pastures and ploughland. Economically, a son is independent to this extent, although his ability to exploit his right to the natural resources is restricted by his father's control of animals. Ultimately, however, this restriction cannot amount to stultification, because a man has the right to 613 422 735 demand food. In practice, a poor man staves off hunger with donations from this or that individual, and superficially it appears that he is dependent on the personal charity of his fellowmen. This is not so, for what is implicit is that the parcels of wealth controlled by individuals are the possessions of the corporation. It is not accidental that poor people do not go hungry. During my entire stay among the Bedouin I never saw one of them beg or [556] suffer hunger, however marginal the diet of many. Clearly, those with a surplus can and do use it for personal advantage, but the extent to which they can do so is circumscribed by the legal claims which members of a corporation have on the parcels of moveable property held by each of them.

613 421 428 Control over the wealth, whether it be animals or the procreative functions of women, rests, in the final analysis, in a corporation. Inheritance laws specify that women are not legal heirs,[8] and that all male children are [562] equal heirs. Women do, in fact, come to control property, and it is rare that [593] wealth is equally divided among male heirs. The precise details of inheritance may partly be decided by a father, but he is limited in his actions. Most of the time inheritance disputes are not of the kind which require action by the corporate group; a case which occured while I was resident with the Bedouin did, however, invoke immediate action. A man, who had left the desert to live in a village on the plateau, had only one daughter. He made it known that he intended to will his entire property to his daughter. When the news was brought to the camps of his fellow agnates, there was great consternation, because, as became clear in their lengthy discussions, the threat now existed that a substantial parcel of property would be removed from the group, a threat made real by the proposed marriage of the daughter [584] to a man of another tribe. The court would have to recognise the daughter's right to some of the property, and the members of the group reluctantly had to concede that there was little they could do about this, but they had one [593] action left to them — they decided that her nearest agnate should demand [584] her in marriage. Usually, the choice of husband for a daughter is a decision

[771] [795] [671] [8] The Bedouin are Sunni Muslims, and, as Samusi, belong to the Maliki school in legal matters. According to court law, women are heirs. However, actual Bedouin practice is contrary to law. For, if women were permitted to inherit, since many marry outside the corporation into which they were born, they could alienate its resources.

her father takes, but in certain critical situations he can be relieved of choice if the interests of the group as a whole are at stake.

Political authority is the preserve of a corporation, and its exercise leads to invasion of a man's authority in the field of domestic relations. This does not mean, however, that discrete areas of authority do not remain with the father. In the tent his authority over his son is so overwhelming as to keep the son in almost complete subordination. The son is referred to as a slave, and in daily life he has to behave as one. He must obey every command, for, were he to rebel, he would find little or no support among his agnates, whatever the extent of the provocation. Retreat from his father is hardly an alternative, since, while his father is alive, he has no animals of his own, and to leave camp would only mean that he would have to move outside his group to seek employment elsewhere as a shepherd. If he did this he would forfeit status, and almost certainly cut himself off from property which would fall to him after his father's death. A man who "denies" his father looses too many privileges for the practice to become widespread.

Caught in this dilemma, a son's predicament is worsened by the fact that he cannot initiate marriage negotiations — to be able to do so requires some animals to offer a girl's father. Through his mother's brother he has the means of bringing pressure to bear on his father, but the latter can resist for years. Finally, a marriage is arranged for him. It is difficult to convey the yearning of young Bedouin for marriage. They discuss it among themselves *ad nauseam*. For the most part their talk is about the sexual aspect of marriage. Premarital sex relations are strictly controlled, and the movements of each young girl are carefully guarded because, if on the day of her marriage the test shows that she is not a virgin, she not only brings disgrace to her family, but the marriage may be revoked and her worth as a bride for another man seriously diminished. Nevertheless premarital relations do occur, if not between youths and maidens to any extent, between young men and married women.

The question still remains: why is marriage the occasion of such ebullient celebration? The formal authority a father exercises over his son changes little on marriage. Economically the son is still harnessed to the father. The latter still shouts his orders at him, and obedience remains unaltered. Any sign of an independent view on a matter is met with a gruff rebuff. If the marriage turns out to be disagreeable to the father, he has the authority — if not always the power — to break it. Marriage does not mean a change in the general mode of behaviour between the two; the legal relations remain unaltered, albeit modified in practice, as the married son matures in age. But marriage does mean the acquisition of rights and status previously denied a son. Henceforward, he has a domain of his own. This is high drama, indeed, for although every effort is made to give substance to the expressed view that "nothing has happened," for the first time in his life the son has seized publicly, amid the jubilations of his fellows, a status which hitherto was the possession of the father.

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The Meaning of Marriage

581 Until marriage the changes in a man's life have been in the nature of
585 an ordered sequence of development from a child to be cared for — the only
342 time in his life when a father, without inhibition, showers on him his love
[593] and affection — to one who, by degrees, makes an increasing contribution to a production unit. Marriage necessitates that a man pitch a tent for himself. With a tent he becomes a potential host and protector of others. The local idiom for marriage is "to set up a tent." It would be quite improper to use
[196] the verb "to marry" when inquiring whether a marriage has taken place
[195] since this verb also has the meaning of "to have sexual intercourse." Instead the euphemism, "Have you pitched a tent?" is used. The Arabic word for a tent in this context is *Bait*. It is not used to refer to a military tent, nor to the small tent which shelters only a widow. It is reserved for the Bedouin tent, which usually has a wool top, and, most importantly, holds the promise of the continuation of life, whether it shelters a newly married couple, a mature family or young unmarried people. (The word *Bait* represents a complex concept, and it would be too much of a diversion here to discuss the various points of its significance. It is essential to understand that its
[1118] meaning is not confined to a tent in the physical sense.) Its top has *Baraka* (divine goodness) in it; the quality of *Haram*, which makes it possible for the tent to be used as a sanctuary, is associated with it and this quality of *Haram* extends, moreover, to the ropes of the tent, so that anyone who clutches them comes under the protection of the owner. In it, the wife must permanently reside and her husband has the legal right to insist on this. In it too, he has the legal right of sexual access to a woman, his wife. Any children
[885] born in it he can claim as his own. With the erection of a tent the son reaches adulthood, and it is in this sense that he can be said to have acquired a domain of his own.

581 Marriage gives a son greater freedom and less dependence on his father
585 in another sense. A second euphemism used for marriage is "making a
[593] relationship," specifically an affinal one. Relationships between a man and
[195] his father-in-law are diverse and are used in various ways in different situations. Here, the particular aspect which needs to be stressed is that a man
606 can cajole his father-in-law, and (through his wife) wealth, in the form
425 of animals, may pass from the former to the latter. Reciprocal gifts are passed
556 between affines on certain occasions, but in addition small amounts may pass which are not connected with the formal occasions of exchanges. Debt
583 lies between them. It begins with the initiation of marriage negotiations,
584 when the suitor's kinsmen take a prescribed number of sheep to present to
606 the girl's father if negotiations are successful. They promise to transfer bride-wealth[9] to the girl's father. A few weeks after the marriage, the hus-

[171] [9] I use the word "bride-wealth" because it has become so familiar in the literature, but the only similarity between the *Sahiba* of the Bedouin and the bride-wealth of

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band is required to take gifts to his mother-in-law in recognition of the fact that she nourished his wife as an infant (the literal meaning of the word used for this gift is "milk"). A return visit is made and gifts are given to the daughter. When the first child is born an animal is presented by the affines, and if the child is a male, the gift may be several sheep, or even a few camels if the father-in-law is very wealthy. Formal exchange of gifts continue, but, in addition, informal transfers are made. Moreover, if relations between a man and his father-in-law develop favourably, it is not uncommon for a young husband, during the early years of marriage, to move away from his father and pitch his tent alongside that of his father-in-law. Marriage gives a son affinal relations of his own. Affinity can alleviate the dead weight of paternal authority.

It is suggested that the crisis the marriage of a son assumes for a father is the shift it entails in the distribution of authority. This is borne out by other details in the marriage ceremony referred to earlier. Ordinarily, young men dare not sing within earshot of their senior agnates. Far from allowing obscenities, agnates of the ascending generation would not allow even a mention of women to be made by young men, in their presence. In a group consisting of young men and an agnate, I chanced to use the noun for woman and immediately my tent was cleared of all but the senior agnate. At a wedding the young men revel in their lewd songs and shout their obscenities for all to hear. The senior agnates stand aside and make a show of ignoring the proceedings. And well they may, for each marriage is a challenge to the exclusive authority they have enjoyed; each nuptial tent is an invasion of the domain of which they have been undisputed masters. Marriage is the only occasion when the men of one generation can clap and sing their defiance of an older one, and give warning of the changes which must be accommodated however great the pretence that nothing has happened.

Marriage ceremonies dramatise the clash between adjacent generations over the distribution of certain forms of authority. If this authority is as overwhelming as has been suggested, and if it is so deeply resented, how is it that life is endurable for juniors? Relationships between junior and senior agnates are so restrictive that they almost amount to what Professor Fortes has suggested I view as a form of avoidance relationships. Juniors must always defer, they must obey commands promptly, they serve their seniors, they must accept a lead when it is given and the restrictions on conversations exclude all reference to women, marriage or sex. These are not simply a set of general guides for behaviour, they are rigidly applied rules, deviation from which is countered with rebuke or greater severity. It would appear from this

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many African societies is that wealth is transferred. Obviously, in societies where the rules of exogamy compel a dispersion of links outside a man's own clan, what is involved in this transfer of wealth cannot be sociologically similar to one in which marriage to the first cousin on either side is permitted.

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561 602 that young men spend their premarital lives in an environment of unmitigated agnatic hostility. Greater substance is given to this view when it is realised that agnates live together. The residential concentration of agnates 561 in Cyrenaica exceeds 80 per cent. I wish to stress that this figure is based 602 on the universe of the small camp, and the only males included as agnates are 621 those who are consanguinely related. Over 50 such camps were used in arriving at the figure. Obviously, the figure of agnatic concentration will vary depending on the universe. If all men who claim to belong to a tribe of, say, 15,000 souls, who claim that they are agnates in a political sense are included, then the figure will not be the same as that derived from a small group where the criterion for inclusion is consanguinity, not mere political affiliation. It is necessary to make this clear to emphasise that the Cyrenaican figure is unusually high, and also because the modes of behaviour between consanguineal and political agnates differ critically. Granted the hostility [578] built into agnation, and recognising in addition the significance of the high degree of agnatic concentration, unless there are other factors present in the situation, life would be intolerably burdensome. Parallel-cousin marriage comes to the rescue.

Parallel-Cousin Marriage

582 Among the Bedouin the prohibited degrees of marriage are few. A man may not marry within a closer range than first paternal or maternal cousin; he cannot marry a woman of a senior generation, nor a woman known to be older. He cannot marry the daughters of a woman who has acted as wet nurse to him or to any of his brothers and sisters. Otherwise he is permitted to marry any other woman. Marriage with the first paternal cousin is pre- 582 ferred, and is more than a sentiment. A man has a right to his father's brother's daughter, and before a marriage is arranged with anyone else, the 585 girl's father seeks the opinion of his brother's son. If he neglects to do this, 578 or if he flouts the opinion offered him, he runs the risk of the marriage being brought to a halt on the very wedding day. I have witnessed this. In most of the records I possess, it usually happens that the brother's son is bought off with a few sheep (about five) and some articles of clothing. Here the brother's son was seizing the occasion to extort from a farmer's brother wealth which he considered was due him from an earlier inheritance [589] dispute. Occasionally the intervention is genuinely designed to prevent a marriage; if the girl refuses to marry her father's brother's son, he can force 582 her into spinsterhood. Men exercise their right to marry their first parallel cousins. They also marry other parallel cousins. The significance of parallel-cousin marriage varies with the exact degree of the relationship. First- and, say, third-parallel cousins are sociologically different in a number of respects, and in relation to specific problems these differences may assume major [602] importance. In the present discussion the various degrees have this in common: that whatever the precise relationship, all parallel cousins are the

daughters of agnates and, in view of the high agnatic concentration, the daughters of agnates who are co-residents as well. Parallel-cousin marriage therefore creates affinity between co-resident agnates. 582 602

The rate of parallel-cousin marriage is high, producing such a density of kinship relationships as to afford a reliable index for defining the agnatic corporation. As a form of marriage it persists; genealogical records clearly demonstrate this. Frequency of parallel-cousin marriage taken together with its persistency, means, above all else, that it makes an agnatic group a cognatic group as well. The matter is put in this way to suit the general development of the argument, but it would be a serious error to think that this means I am giving priority to agnation and that I am considering cognation as intrusive, or that, in this society, agnation can stand on its own because it has a kind of absolute significance other forms of relationship do not possess. Both forms exist in reality.

The great Bu Bakr of Cyrenaica's most celebrated lineage is alleged to have exhorted his fellow tribesmen to "marry your father's brother's daughters and then your paternal relatives and your maternal relatives will become one." Whether he had given the advice or not, the Bedouin, as their society is constituted, would marry them anyway. The Bedouin form of agnation without its accompanying parallel-cousin marriage would impose impossible restrictions, if indeed there is any point in attempting to conceive of a situation so remote from reality. With parallel-cousin marriage present in the corporate group, men referred to as agnates are not agnates only; each and every one of them is the centre of a bundle of roles, each role potentially as important as the other. It would be false to argue, moreover, that complexities of relationships can be unravelled by analytically separating them, giving precedence to the agnatic role in an "agnatic" situation, the mother's brother's role in a domestic situation and so on. An agnate who is also a mother's brother is never the same, in any situation, as an agnate to whom one is not otherwise related. The prime significance of parallel-cousin marriage is that it creates a complexity of linkages which almost amount to confusion, thereby maximising the choice available to individuals to meet whatever contingencies befall them. [613] [613] [554] [182]

The only area of relationships left relatively undisturbed by parallel-cousin marriage is the son, father and father's brother triangle. Freed of the complications stemming from parallel-cousin marriage, agnation can here approximate its true form. Other complications arise out of marriage. A few are listed here: father and son marry a mother and her daughter; a form of exchange marriage between first parallel-cousins occur; two brothers marry two sisters; the marriage of two brothers to two sisters is followed, in the succeeding generation, by the son of one union marrying the daughter of the other, making this latter a double first parallel-cousin marriage — both a father's brother's daughter's and a mother's sister's daughter's marriage. These forms can all occur within a corporate group. No citadel of agnation can withstand this attack. All forms of marriage combine to break the grip 582 583 [613] [602]

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582 583 613 602 of agnation on the members of a corporate group and give it a taproot of diversity whence it derives its strength, and which makes of it "the one body," conspicuous, in comparison with other societies, as the corporate group *par excellence*.

The Sister's Son-Mother's Brother Relationship

128 Previously the mode of relationships associated with agnation and affinity have been briefly discussed. In order to appreciate the effects of parallel-cousin marriage, some remarks concerning the sister's son-mother's brother set of relationships must be included here. Bedouin contrast the mother's 604 [174] brother with the father's brother; their sayings and proverbs afford a wealth of verbal documentation on the contrast. With the mother's brother a man enjoys all the freedoms he is denied in his relationships with his father [831] and father's brother. He is permitted to joke with him; they indulge in exchanges of obscenities. When the sister's son wishes to marry, he is permitted to discuss the matter with his mother's brother and can urge him to intercede with his father on his behalf. Two men thus related are readily recognised in the camps, because in their acts they are required to show affection by displays of innocent horseplay, pranks or mild practical jokes. Small boys pursue their mother's brother, feign to kick or strike him, and he takes it all in good part.

The external aspects of this behaviour is deceptive. Joking of this sort creates the image in which the relationships are conceived; what is equally striking in it is its compulsiveness. Obviously, mature men are not always in the mood to be teased, but if they are, they must respond appropriately. Their relationships are unmistakably onerous. This remark applies not only to the external forms of their behaviour, but also to the favours a man is [602] permitted to ask of his mother's brother. A brief amplification will make the point clear. Demands can be made of agnates, but only in situations of serious contingency. Day-to-day needs are met, not by appeals to the rights of agnation, but from the expectations linked to the mother's brother. If these expectations are withheld, the sister's son may be left in a quandary. In- 604 682 terestingly, in the records of homicides I gathered, three (in the contemporary population) were concerned with the killings of mother's brothers by sister's sons. Homicide within this field of relationship is difficult to comprehend unless it is appreciated that expectations are as compulsive in the daily life and the general well-being of people as are the rights and duties associated with agnation.

604 613 These general remarks apply to the relationships irrespective of the lineage origin of the mother's brother. The similarity ends there, since the nature of the expectations, their urgency at any given moment and the kind of favours which are granted vary with the group identity of the mother's [428] brother. A mother's brother who is a member of ego's corporate group may be expected to give the sister's son small quantities of flour, favour him in all

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sorts of petty ways, listen to his grumbles about his agnates, interfere on his behalf in petty camp quarrels, shield him from the disciplinarian father and guard his property interests against the predatory father's brother; if the mother's brother dies without heirs, the sister's son can reasonably expect at least a share of his wealth. When the mother's brother is a member of a different corporate group, a sister's son cannot possibly expect to inherit from him in any circumstance.

The mother's brother may reside in a camp too distant to be much effective direct help in day-to-day living. His relative remoteness gives the relationship other possible opportunities, however. Rainfall in the semi-desert area of Cyrenaica is highly variable, both from year to year, and from place to place in any given year. As a result this shallow saucer of a depression may have sufficient rain to supply both the water needs of animals and crops, while an area a few miles distant will have inadequate water supplies for either. The mother's brother-sister's son link can mean water for animals and a crop of barley for both when, in successive years, the resources of one area or the other are inadequate.

The differences in the relations between men and their mother's brother do not end with a characterisation of their antipodal forms. The demographic structure of a group may be such that one man may have a number of mother's brothers, another only one; one man may have to share with several brothers, another may be an only son. Complications of this sort determine the precise relationships between men, but however intricate these may be, each corporate group has its matrilateral links with a group occupying a slightly different ecological area, and it also has a plurality of matrilateral connections within it. Further, if a direct connection is not available to any particular individual he can use an indirect link (e.g. father's mother's brother or mother's mother's brother) to satisfy his needs.

The Preference for Males

Thus far, the family and the social matrix in which it is embedded has been discussed in general terms, most particularly in reference to several selected sets of relationships. I wish now to place these relationships in a more specific setting with a brief discussion of the composition of a small camp of a group inhabiting the arid areas of central Cyrenaica. When the Bedouin give their views on the structure of the family in Cyrenaica they speak of it as consisting of a pair of spouses and about ten children, mainly males. The emphasis on males is not mere sentiment, overwhelmingly though it favours them against females. Additional males in a family increase the productive possibilities of a family in the sense that more herdsmen become available and larger ploughing commitments can be undertaken; an increase in the number of females has small effect on production since they are precluded from any direct participation in these activities. Both sexes, ranging in age from about seven years to mature adulthood, are necessary if a family

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829 is to constitute a viable economic unit; and if it is to expand, the number
594 of males must be increased disproportionately compared with females. Since
562 the structure of this "ideal family" (which in the sentiments of the Bedouin
858 is the only family) is based on the division of labour, some details of the tasks and their allocation among members of a family are included to estimate the importance of this notional "ideal family."

The Division of Labour, by Sex

462 The tasks women perform are almost entirely associated with the tent.
286 They make the tent top, and the gaily coloured carpets which cover the sandy ground in the men's quarters. They also weave the material for making sacks, and nose bags for horses and camels. Throughout the year a piece of weaving is always on the loom waiting, and while any women of the tent may take a turn at weaving, the mother decides what is to be made,
462 its pattern and colours and in general directs operations. Women also pitch
342 the tent when the camp is moved; they do so unaided by the men. It is a task which requires considerable strength and only grown girls and mature women can assist in this; younger girls scour the vicinity in search of stones to hold the sides of the tent on the ground after it has been erected.
[356] As soon as pitching is complete, the floor of the tent is brushed clean before carpets are spread and the few articles of personal belongings placed in their proper position.

462 Next, brushwood must be fetched in large quantities for fires. Apart
313 from cooking needs and winter warmth, the fire of each tent is in constant use for preparing the sickly sweet tea, almost the consistency of syrup, which is drunk several times a day regularly and which is made again for even the casual visitor. The task of fetching brushwood is performed daily, and each load takes a few hours of a woman's time to gather and bring back
[412] to the tent. Bushes are uprooted with the aid of a long-handled adze and piled together, to be carried on her back for the homeward journey. The load is cumbersome and heavy; only girls in their late teens and mature women can cope with it.

462 All cooking is done by the women. Most meals consist of cereal dishes of
252 various sorts, so that grinding, using heavy millstones, is a perpetual ac-
412 tivity to satisfy the demands for large quantities of flour. Millstones are bought in the villages. In most small camps there only one or two sets, so they are passed round from one woman to another. The stones are very heavy but when they are carried from tent to tent men offer no assistance.

462 Each tent also requires large quantities of water for human consumption.
312 If the camp is located near a well, water is drawn in small quantities, frequently. Young girls and boys take a donkey to the well, fill a couple of
[492] jerry cans with water, wait for an older sister to load them on the donkey and then drive the beast back to camp. After a fall of rain, while puddles of water remain on the ground, mature women make haste to gather the

surface water in jerry cans, bringing them back to the tents, one at a time, on their backs. Clothes are kept clean in the desert, and the women do the washing.

The care of children from birth until they are a few years old is the responsibility of the woman. Childbirth causes a minimum interruption in the daily sequence of a mother's activities. The child is breastfed if the mother has milk; if not, a wet nurse is sought or goat milk is substituted. Other than the time given to feeding it, the infant does not take up much of the mother's time. It is placed in a hammock slung between the centre poles of the tent and rocked by the mother as she passes to and fro. If nursing in illness is required, the mother devotes herself to it; her other tasks must then be performed by another woman.

As children acquire mobility, and at a time when, perhaps, the mother is pregnant again, they become so fractious one with the other that if help was unavailable the nervous strain could seriously disrupt the normal routine of work. During the early years of marriage, when daughters are still too young to look after their small brothers and sisters, the grandmother's help in child-rearing is invaluable. Too old for the arduous tasks of the daily routine, she may assist in teasing and spinning the raw wool, but it is in her role as nursemaid that she assumes importance. Children of both sexes are given the comfort of suckling at her breast, receiving attention and care for which the young mother could not possibly afford the time.

Caring for children takes up little of a man's time, and is mostly incidental. The woman, on the other hand, devotes relatively little of her time to the animals. She does the milking in spring — of camels, sheep and goats — but herding is not her responsibility, save for partly tending goats. Goats, when they are in the vicinity of the camp, are looked after by boys and girls of about eight to ten years of age. In springtime when they have dropped their young, or if some of them have to be retained in the camp at night for various reasons, the woman makes a brushwood enclosure at the side of the tent and sees the goats safely inside before nightfall.

A catalogue of the tasks for which women are responsible may not seem very impressive; the number of tasks is not excessive, but the persistence of the routine bends the backs of most women. Paradoxically, any suggestion that men should take over female tasks would strike them as absurd. Assistance from one of the same sex is always a welcome relief, but the abrogation of a particular task by men would be interpreted by women as the loss of a right. For, in the division of labour, it is not merely that tasks are allocated between the sexes for expedient reasons, or in consideration of the labour involved or because tasks which can be performed in the vicinity of the camp are left to women; division of labour would not make sense on these grounds, however strong they may be in Bedouin sentiments. Each task which falls to the lot of woman constitutes a right exclusive to her. Fetching firewood is not only a chore; it is a woman's prerogative. The insistence that only a woman can undertake certain tasks has nothing to do with her liking

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462 424 them or any innate aptitude for them; this insistence is an index of the jealousy with which she is prepared to guard her rights. Each right derived from this or that small task is an extension of her control over the male.

462 424 252 [593] The force and significance of this control is, perhaps, best seen in a woman's right to cook. At marriage a woman must have at least the minimum of cooking utensils, and one of the rights a man acquires in a woman is that she cooks for him. This is something a man cannot do for himself. Therefore, when a man ill-treats his wife or threatens her with divorce, she can retaliate by refusing to cook, or leave the tent altogether to return to her father. A man bereft of this service is in a very sorry plight indeed. The legal dominance of the male, seemingly autocratic, is reduced at every point by the control a woman exercises through her exclusive right to perform tasks. The limits to the area of her coercive powers are significant. They are confined almost wholly to domestic relationships. Legally, women 562 suffer such disabilities that they are almost of the status of minors; in reality, their day-to-day living is far from intolerable because they are able to control males over a wide field of relationships.

462 424 231 Men, excluded in the main from domestic duties around the tent, perform tasks to which their legal rights are tied. While women have access to wells for water used by human beings, the transport of larger quantities of water over longer distances, requiring the use of camels, is a task which falls to the men. Watering of animals is done by men. Only they can slaughter the animals for food. The meat of an animal slaughtered by a woman is not "free," in a ritual sense, for human consumption. In an extremity only, a woman can, in effect, kill an animal, but the knife which cuts its throat must be held in a male hand, even if it is the hand of a very small boy. The exploitation of the land is also the male prerogative. They [462] [424] [241] plough and sow the grain; incidental help may be provided by wives working alongside their husbands during the early part of reaping, but the main reaping is done entirely by men. Transportation of grain to the mounds is also carried out by men, and it is they only who have access to the grain stores when quantities are withdrawn for family use. Sheep-shearing is [236] [432] carried out entirely by males,[10] the fleeces are stacked by them and the distribution and sales of these is directed by the male head of the tent.

[334] [342] Additional to these major tasks which males undertake are a number of minor ones. Men sew strips of cotton together to make clothes for both sexes. They also make rope of grass, albeit in a desultory sort of way, by twisting together the strands between the palms of the hands. A number of other tasks fall to the men by virtue of the fact that the sexes are separated in the tent by a divider of blanket material, which may be taken down when only members of the elementary family are about, but which is put

[461] [533] [538] [831] [10] This work is reserved for the younger men and takes the form of a festival during which lewd songs are sung and poems with obscene themes or references are recited loudly and within the hearing of elders, in a manner not dissimilar to the behaviour of bachelors at a wedding.

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in position immediately anyone else appears at the entrance to the tent.[11] Women cook, but they do not serve the meal to males, nor are they responsible for the distribution of meat among them. Parts of an animal are carefully specified, and the various portions distributed at a meal carry with them a great deal of significance. A host can honour, flatter, disappoint or even insult his guest, depending on the precise distribution of meat he adopts. Designated portions should go to certain kinsmen if they are present, but this still leaves a wide margin of choice, and a host can use this choice as part of the many means at his disposal for directing his relationships with other men. A political link can be forged or another snapped by the distribution of portions of meat at the commensal meal.

The Bedouin Ideal Type of Family as a Unit of Production

This account of the division of labour is far from inclusive of all the tasks carried out. The details given are only barely sufficient to provide some indication of the necessary composition of a family. Referring again to the Bedouin sentiments about the matter, it is now possible to give it some numerical precision. The number of females should be a minimum of about three, including a mother, a teen-age daughter and a child of about eight years. Males should number about six: a father, relieved of most chores to act as director; a son in his middle to late twenties, to plough; a second son, in his early to middle twenties, to herd the camels; a third, in his late teens to early twenties, to shepherd the sheep; a fourth, middle to late teens, to look after the goats; and a younger son to fetch, carry and run errands about the camp. The family of the ordinary Bedouin, they say, shows this sex and age distribution, although they recognise that a politically ambitious man with the wealth to match his aspirations would require more of both sexes — particularly women, since the burden of entertainment increases rapidly with a man's climb to power and fame.

Clearly, the basis of Bedouin sentiment concerning family structure is its approximation to an ideal production unit. Some families display the features of this ideal, but even they enjoy the productive benefits of this composition for a very limited period only. The family, as described above, can only be an ephemeral unit, since the age structure constantly changes, women are removed by marriage, men move away and death affects it at any point at any time. The Bedouin family is a fiction in the sense that it can be said to have a characteristic composition. The mistake they make is to conceive of it as a particular kinship structure related to production. The substance of what has been referred to as a fiction is that, if viewed as a productive unit, it bears close consistency with reality. Freed of the need to examine it in terms of specifically limited kinship relationships, and no longer anchored to the inhabitants of a single tent, the distribution of people according to sex and

[11] This is the general rule. In practice, the use of the divider can indicate an intimacy or distance in relationships, most subtly.

age depicted in their notion of a family is meaningful. It follows that, since this unit will not be clustered in one tent, but distributed over several, each small community must be so constituted that links people can use to claim the services of others must exist, and that, since claims can be made against various sorts of kinship relationships, each small camp will have predictable kin links. It follows, further, that since age, sex and number of people are significant, a small camp will have a characteristic demographic structure; each tent in a camp will display developmental changes, and particular tents may be shifted from one camp to another, but if a livelihood is to be gained in this semi-desert environment supporting its mixed pastoral-cum-agricultural economy, then at any given time the small camp must have certain fixed features in its composition. The elementary family is subject to far too many vicissitudes to exist on its own. It now remains to demonstrate this general argument by examining the details of one of these small camps.

A Particular Camp Viewed in Detail

The camp was one of 12 which constitute a minimal tribal section. In genealogical terms its male members were linked through an ancestor five ascending generations from living males of about 20 years of age. Usually, in summer, camps of this sort move to the vicinity of a large watering point; in winter, this larger community breaks up into a number of smaller ones as man and animals move off further south to the pastures. The total living population of the tribal section to which this particular camp belonged was 524.

Linked patrilineally, its male members were also linked in a plurality of other consanguineal ways. Primarily, this plurality was brought about by parallel-cousin marriage. The incidence of this form of marriage for males of this group was 48 per cent[12] of the gross total of 234, derived from their marriages over three generations; that is, the generation of males entering into marriage, and the generation which has begun to die out are included with the generation of middle-aged males. This means that practically every male is related to others in a number of ways, and it is necessary to point this out now because the details to be given presently will show only the more immediate, but not all, existing connections. Plurality of links, moreover, is not the only consequence. Parallel-cousin marriage is a transmuting agent, creating a diversity of links. Each and every link carries with it specific modes of behaviour, which in turn means that each individual has a wide variety of different claims he can press on his co-residents. Marriage connections also exist with other sections of the same tribe. Their proportion is 28 per cent of the total. Demographically, it

[12] As a matter of interest, the figure for marriage to the father's brother's daughter is 50 per cent of the figure for parallel-cousin marriage in general, but the consequences of these are beyond the scope of the present discussion.

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would be impossible to satisfy all marriage expectations of men within the universe of the minimal tribal section. For this reason alone external links are inevitable and persistent. Also, the small territorial strip such a group claims as a homeland produces an economy which, in this environment, is unstable. Additional security is gained by making connections with other tribal sections, each with its specific ecological character. Men also marry into their client groups. The proportion of these for this camp was 9 per cent of the total. From these links they gain economic advantages, they can claim services and a client-following is politically significant. Finally, 7 per cent of the total[18] are marriages with women of other tribes, which again not only reduces the instability of the economy (in that a large tribal area suffering near-famine conditions has access to areas of markedly different ecology), but also provides political connections for men whose power ambitions have passed the point of leadership limited to their own tribes. In one way or another all these interests are manifest in the small camp and attention is now directed to the latter.

The disposition of people in the camp is represented diagrammatically on the page following.

The nucleus of the camp is Tent A. Its owner (1) was a powerful *Shaikh*, the son of a famous father. His marriage represents a political link with a group of one of the primary sections of his own tribe. His father died only a few years before I recorded my census, and the large amount of moveable property he left had still not been divided among the sons; the owner of the tent, as eldest brother, still controlled the flocks and herds. Most of his time he spent away from the camp engaging in political intrigue. His two younger brothers lived in his tent, but the second (5) would not remain there long because negotiations for his marriage had been started. His father (2) married a parallel cousin; she died and shortly afterwards he took her sister (3) in sororal union. When this occurred an amount of bride-wealth was agreed, but instead of giving any of it to her father, the entire amount was "put in front of her" (that is, the animals were allowed to remain with her husband's flock), and these animals she had marked with her brother's tribal sign to distinguish them from those of her husband. It was widely known that she was going to leave these animals to her husband's second son, for although she could not transfer them to a male outside her husband's corporate group, she could decide who, among his heirs, should inherit.

During my stay in this camp, her brother's son (4) came to it as a temporary resident for a month. Since he was poor, the purpose of his visit was to capture some of his aunt's wealth while she was still alive and the possibility still existed. During his stay he was fed well but did no work. His kinsmen found his company tiresome, so, to cut short his stay, and after consulting her nominated heir (5), she gave him three grown goats. Also when an occasion arose for an animal slaughter, she provided the sheep, and,

[18] The remainder is made up of marriages to the daughters of men incorporated into the lineages.

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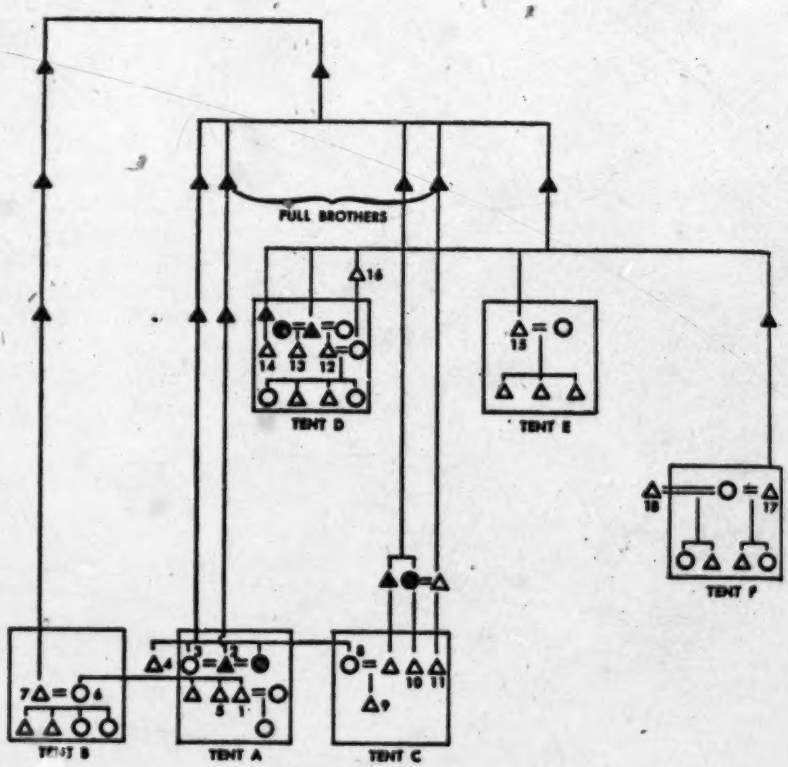

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since meat is shared by all the people of the camp, her wealth was partly dispersed among her poorer kinsfolk.

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The location of Tent B was determined by the fact that the wife (6) was the sister of (3) of Tent A. Her husband (7) had moved into the camp a few years earlier as a result of an inheritance quarrel with his elder who robbed him of his fair share. This husband (7) gained in two ways from the move. Although poor, he had a small flock of his own, too small to justify its own shepherd, but which he was permitted to include with his sister-in-law's (3) flock for shepherding. If the flock had been larger he would still have had difficulties, because, at some times of the year, save for short occasional visits to camp, the shepherd is with his sheep for several weeks, day and night. He (7) had three sons, still far too young to follow the sheep, but when they become of age to do so, his dependence on Tent A will cease, for then he can begin to gather the small flocks of other kinsmen around his own, his sons can shepherd them all and he can begin to

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enjoy the benefits to be derived from dependents. In addition, he enjoyed

the lavish generosity dispensed by the members of Tent A, and fed far better than would have been possible otherwise. 621 592 571

The location of Tent C was also determined by a link through women. The only female (8) living in this tent, a middle-aged widow, was the sister of (3) and (6) of Tents A and B respectively. Her teenage son lived with her. They possessed only a few sheep, which were put with the flock of Tent A for shepherding. The son (9) spent some of his time herding for Tent A. With the mother and her son in Tent C were two other kinsmen. One, a poor man (10), was this son's first patrilateral cousin, and they both were the only surviving sons of their respective fathers. He (10) was the main shepherd of Tent A. The third male (11), also poor and nearly blind, was a second patrilateral cousin of both, but his sister was also 11's mother. All occupants of Tent C were almost entirely supported by Tent A. Relieved of the necessity to live off their own resources, the two young men (9 and 10) were afforded the opportunity of building up their flocks for the day when they would be able to negotiate their delayed marriages. [574]

Tents A, B and C sheltered men who were agnatically closely linked. More important, their grandfathers, three sons in a family of 19 children, were full brothers. The latter's mother's name was used when referring to these three tents as a group. During the past few years, many changes have occurred within it, and the death of the pivotal woman (3) of Tent A might well disperse this small cluster. Further, the nuptials of her heir (5) were anticipated, and this event, itself likely to precipitate division of his father's (2) wealth, might also lead to further residential rearrangements. 621 613 592 571

The owner of Tent D, (12), a man in his late thirties, son of a slave mother, was at loggerheads with his father's brother, much more senior in age. The owner's father, one of a family of 24 children, had been a wealthy man and died leaving a substantial herd and a large flock, but he (12) was bereft of most of this wealth by the father's brother. His first successful strike against his uncle was the demand he made for his daughter as a wife. Earlier, when (12) had demanded his father's wealth, his father's brother, who had for years acted as his guardian, replied, "It is in your stomach," (meaning that it had been expended on his upbringing). Later, after the marriage had taken place, when the uncle demanded payment of the bride-wealth his own words were thrown back at him, but this time with the meaning that the bride-wealth had already been paid. While I was resident in this area, the two men met occasionally: each meeting was hostile, for (12) was encouraging his half-brother (13) (also the son of a slave mother) to demand a second daughter as a wife. Included in this tent is a third adult male (14), virtually a pauper, reduced to this state by the same grasping father's brother. His link with (12) was their closeness of relationship (first paternal cousin), together with the fact that all three males (12, 13 and 14) had suffered privations and were allies against the common enemy, their father's brother. 621 592 604 578 [582] [428] [583] [571]

Associated with them for the same reason, was the owner of Tent E (15).

Cases

621 592 578 [604] [428] [593] Genealogically he was their father's brother, but he was of their same age generation, and behaved as if he was their agnatic equal. Towards his own brother (16), he behaved as if the latter was his uncle, for he was much his junior in age and his uncle had virtually brought him up from boyhood. They had quarrelled bitterly because his brother (16) had given him only a fraction of his inheritance, which he himself, in turn, should have shared with his young full brother (not shown on the diagram) but he did not do so. This youngest brother left (15) for this reason and now resides with (16), his full brother's enemy. Two of the men (14 and 13) of this 621 592 group of four were the chief herdsmen of the camp, although they were [233] assisted for short periods by (12) and (15), who also helped tend the [571] camels in other ways. Their connection with the group centered on Tent A was a mutual close link to a politically powerful person (not shown on the genealogies) to whom they are deeply loyal and who, while I was among them, was actively opposed to the common political enemy of them all (16), and who in earlier years had challenged the leadership of (2) of Tent A. [613] [602] There is also the fact that they were all linked within a close range of agnation. This linkage included, too, the owner of Tent F (17), not in fact the descendant of the man shown in the diagram — he was the son of a slave wife; his genitor was a slave, but his mother's master reared him, freed him and he is now given as his son in the genealogy. He lives with his wife, of client origin, together with her children from a previous husband, (18), who divorced her, and his own children. Aging, he no longer acted as a regular herdsmen, but relieved other men in the camp, and also spent some time shepherding.

621 571 The details given of the strands which run through the camp to tie these particular people together are so few that, like the Bedouin plough, they do no more than scratch the surface, but they are sufficient to permit a few general statements. The camp, and particularly the precise disposition of 621 its tents, shows a group of males clustered together to share two of the main 571 economic tasks: shepherding and herding. The physically strong adult males 571 of Tents D and E shoulder the burden of herding all the camels of the camp, 233 and the men of Tents B, A and C shepherd all the sheep, with (17) of 462 Tent F serving both purposes. This number of men allows some to remain in the camp at all times, to free one of them for a journey to the distant market when supplies of sugar and tea are necessary, and to enable one or two men, at short notice, to hurry away on horse or camel to search for lost animals.[14]

621 574 231 262 43 [556] **Economic Determinants of the General Structure of the Camp**

It is also clear from these details that, given the disparities in wealth (although all men have some wealth), the diet of most is considerably

[14] There is little point in seeking the lost animals themselves in the first instance. A man travels from camp to camp asking for information, and when he has gathered his clues, he searches a neighbourhood.

6: Peters E-5 (1948-1950) 1965 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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ameliorated in its protein content, particularly by the generosity of the occupants of the nucleating Tent A. Not that they are the only ones who ever slaughter their animals for food. Others do so, albeit much less frequently. Whoever kills an animal, everyone present in the camp is given a share, and the men always eat in the tent of the donor, sitting around one bowl. Thus, the surplus that builds up at one point is redistributed among those suffering a shortage, and meat, in a society where the climate and way of life militate against its storage for more than a few days, is more efficiently used. Many other general economic points could be deduced. These general statements could, however, be made of practically any camp, whatever the specific differences.

Affinity and Matrilaterality in the Structure of the Camp

Economic considerations determine the general structure of these small camps, but do not account for the particular people gathered in them. Perhaps one of the most striking features of these camps, which comes out clearly in the one discussed here, is the confined agnatic span which links the males. Lest it be underestimated, I wish to stress the profound significance of this fact. While granting its importance it is equally necessary to stress that the span, potentially, could be considerably reduced; in some camps it is. Many of the closer agnates of the men of this camp are not shown on the genealogy included with the diagram; (7), (15) and (16), for example, all have brothers, (12) has a large number of first paternal cousins and so on. Therefore, this particular cluster of agnates formed for reasons other than agnatic ties. The most direct single thread connecting Tents A, B and C is that which runs through women. Men of many other camps are all linked in this way, directly. Five tents of this camp are connected through a female link to a common ancestress, whose name still defines the group, two ascending generations for one adult male, three from others and four from others. If greater elaboration could have been shown on the genealogy without confusion, additional links through women could have been demonstrated. Affinity and matrilaterality are the prime movers in bringing agnates together as neighbours.

Other Factors Affecting the Structure of the Camp

Other considerations narrow the area in choice of residence. The quest for power where every man entertains hope of achievement where ambitions are not stifled by the rigour of rank and a small amount of wealth provides a basis for a beginning is also a significant factor in considering the composition of camps. The generosity of the people in Tent A was not entirely altruistic. Justly, it had won them repute, but the repute itself was an important aspect of the political power they enjoyed. They also acquired the services of several men to manage their animals, an impossible strain for them alone. And with their shepherds and herdsmen they secured devoted followers. It was hinted in discussing the structure of the camp that changes

6: Peters E-5 (1948-1950) 1965 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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were imminent, because the marriages of two of the men were anticipated, two others harboured more distant hopes and boys in all the tents would soon be youths. The composition of this camp, caught at a moment in time, was a function of the age and sex distribution of its inhabitants. All camps show regularities in their structure, but their content is dynamic. Certain general features persist, but the alignments of people undergo change with equal persistency. What priority is given to each of these considerations, which component occupies the nucleating centre for others, will depend on the problem under analysis, for while I have stressed that this or that is important, I do not wish to suggest that any single factor has an absolute importance compared with others, except in relation to a specific problem.

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